

REFLECTIE

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Borders & Territories

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1. What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (Ar, Ur, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

The topic of the master programme of Borders & Territories this graduation year is; 'Transient Liquidities along the New Silk Road II'. It investigates contemporary border conditions within larger territorial scales, with an emphasis on the socio-political context of architecture.

The studio focuses on the complex border conditions found in Turkey, specifically in Istanbul, due to its historical position on the Old and New Silk Road. The New Silk Road is a reference to the inter-continental infrastructural projects driven by global capitalism and political negotiations, which shape contemporary territorial and urban landscapes. The project particularly highlights the global maritime trade and its manifestation through shipping and container ports, with a specific focus on the Amarel Port complex in Istanbul.

Turkey, Istanbul is regarding its historical position on the Old, - and New Silk Road an intriguing location. Since, it lies on the border between Asia and Europe, complex border conditions appear. Driven by global capitalism and political negotiations, (inter-)continental infrastructural projects form the contemporary territorial and urban landscapes. The New Silk Road is mainly an existing route by sea. Thus, an important manifestation of the New Silk Road is global shipping and the big container ports that are part of it. Shipping is the crux of the global economy and provides important linkages in the network of supply chains. Therefore the focus of this graduation project lies on the global maritime trade which transpires in different forms on different locations. One of the important nodes of this inter-continental infrastructural project is the Amarel Port complex in Istanbul. It occupies an important strategic position on the border of the Eurasian continents. Altogether this graduation project is a multi-scalar, varied investigation into a topic that is many-sided and deals with scientific research, conceptualising, and architectural theory. It is addressing socio-political forces and the impact it has on the built environment. This graduation project involves multi-scalar investigations, scientific research, conceptualization, and architectural theory. It aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion and theoretical research regarding the impact of socio-political forces on the built environment and proposes relevant architectural interventions in response to the findings.

2. How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?

Global maritime trade can be treated as an inter-continental infrastructure system. The research that is done is partially literature research, like the work of Keller Easterling, who is investigating infrastructures. This helped me to understand these mega infrastructure systems and their impact on the urban landscape.

During the analysis of the project site, an understanding of the industrial territory of the port was needed. Therefore, I researched the system of the port activities. This influenced the design choices of the architectural intervention. Since the project is about the automatising of the maritime trade network I had to get a better understanding of this system. Therefore I made a catalog of all the machines working in the port, research on the system in ports, and I did site research on the Port of Antwerp. This helped to get a feel for the large scale of the port's megastructures and to better understand the port's system. Next to that, I researched contemporary artists and architects who address the topic of my project. Like the Belgian architect/artist Luc Deleu who is well known for his projects with port containers and his 'Orbanistisch Manifest'. He writes about urbanism on a planetary scale. Which touches the scale the project is working in. Research into machines and art contributed to see the machine of global shipping trade in different perspectives. Artist like Jean Tinguely, who explored machines and motion as a piece of self-constructing and self-destructing work of art. And artists like Christo and Jeanne Claude and Topstudio who worked on large scale projects, assisted with dealing with the big scale of my project.

3. How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?

The graduation year started with an intensive research methodology of mapping. The method of mapping enabled us to get a better understanding of the spatial conditions of the Marmara Sea region. The studio started with this collective mapping where we encountered cartographic techniques and could compose an index for future individual research of the area. In my case, I collectively mapped the border and migration map. This exhibited the first interaction with the territory. The map represented the aforementioned, strategic location of the Marmara Sea region, functioning as a human transit hub.

The second method of this graduation research is an individual written theory paper. It is structured parallel to the collective mapping and relied on the establishment of a theoretical background. The theory paper supported the formation of a topic for the graduation research and helped to establish a conceptual and theoretical background to support a method and the choice for my topic. The writing of the theory paper is accompanied by input from seminar discussions in which the theoretical themes of the studio and the positioning of the architecture's historical and contemporary debates are discussed.

A workshop organized by the Borders & Territories graduation studio, conducted considering the transition from research and concept towards a free way of design thinking. The workshop was divided into three parts introduced by a lecture about the three topics. Referring to the three themes; site, form (assemblage), and program three physical 2D models were produced in line with the previous research method (three drawings). This

change of method made it possible to see the graduation projects' unexpected potentials. The physical representation of the experiments within the studied phenomenon accompanied the potentials of the project and enabled a discussion about the start of the design proposal. My method of the design phase is partly based on the research I did about the system and logics of the port as a way of critical reflection on the global maritime trade.

4. How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

The UN writes an annual report of the review of maritime transport, in the 2022 report it states that the world fleet's CO₂ emissions are heading in the wrong direction. (Figure 01). They write the following: "Rarely has the importance of maritime logistics for trade and development been more evident than during the last year. Historically high and volatile freight rates, congestion, closed ports and new demands for shipping following COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine have all had measurable impacts on people's lives. With ships carrying over 80% of volume of global trade, higher shipping costs and lower maritime connectivity lead to higher inflation, shortages of food, and interruptions of supply chains – all of which are among the features of the current global crisis." (Review of Maritime Transport 2022, z.d.)

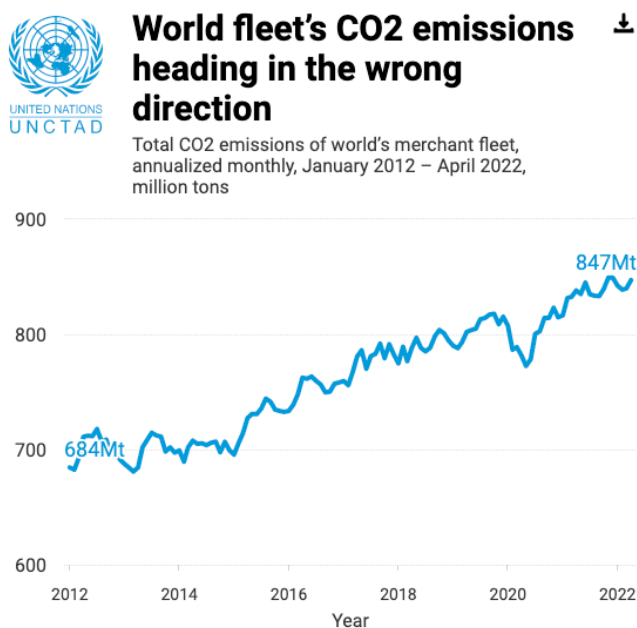


Figure 01. Fleet's CO₂ emissions heading in the wrong direction. (2022). UNCTAD Prosperity for all. <https://unctad.org/rmt2022>

Maritime trade is the biggest business that we know nothing about, because it is a business - to - business industry. The big machine that provides the global movement of our goods makes it possible to order, and receive our packages within a couple days. In history the port was an important part of the city landscape. A juxtaposition is happening now, the ships are getting bigger and bigger, therefore the ports are increasing in size but yet this machine is

getting more invisible. Ports are getting too big so they disappear out of the city, and the maritime activities happening in the middle of the ocean with these megastructures of ships are out of the sight of humans. There is a disconnect with the industry that we barely notice. Why should we care? As long as we get our package that we ordered, we don't care about what happens in between. The big scale of the shipping industry is getting more disconnected of the human scale. Megastructures are needed to cope with the demand of the supply chains. The machine I call the shipping industry is highly automatized to make it as most efficient as possible. Humans are disappearing out of ports and ships. This is a catalyst for a change of the industrial territory and its spatial and environmental impact. How will this automatized machine shape future territories? This project is an investigation of the trend of automatization and the spatial impact it has on the human and urban scales.

5. How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?

Since, ships carry over 80% of the volume of global trade, the increasing of the CO₂ emissions of world's merchant fleet and the high interdependence of human demand, shipping industry and political circumstances, the investigation of maritime trade is of big importance for future environmental impacts. Besides, as stated before this project could be of future value for how to handle challenges of an increasing automatized world. Therefore this graduation project could be of value for future architectural design projects in relation to an automatized almost non human industrial territory consisting of megastructures on the border of urban landscapes.

6. What challenges or obstacles have you encountered during your project, and how have you addressed or overcome them?

The field of maritime trade is totally new for me. As stated in the previous questions, it is a business that we know not much about. Therefore, I had to do a lot of research into this subject. In this way, I learned a lot but to transform it into a architectural concept and design was sometimes challenging. To deal with this, the Modi Operandi contributed to come up with a concept and have the right balance between research and design proposal.

7. What would you do differently if you look back on the last period?

"When reflecting on the last period, one area I would pay closer attention to is the process of making design decisions. While I made decisions based on thorough research and analysis, there were instances where I could have benefitted from a more systematic and holistic approach.

Additionally, I would have sought a balance between creativity and making more concrete design decisions, during the decision-making process. While it is important to push boundaries and think outside the box, it is equally crucial to manage time and dare to make concrete steps. Taking a more iterative approach that combines research and sharpen the concept would have been something to take in account for future projects.